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MAJORITY AND MINORITY

REPORTS

MADE TO

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

OF THE

CITY OF CHARLESTOWN,

MAY 24, 1848,

UPON THE

PETITION OF WILLIAM EAGER AND OTHERS,

FOR

A SEPARATION OF THE SEXES IN THE HARVARD SCHOOL.



BOSTON:

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1848.



## MAJORITY REPORT.

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TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE TRUSTEES OF THE CHARLESTOWN FREE SCHOOLS,—

A majority of the Committee to whom was referred the Petition of William Eager and one hundred and seventyfive others, residents in the Harvard School District, praying that “the details of the Regulations of the School Committee be so altered as to allow the girls to occupy one Hall in the Harvard School House, and the boys the other, under their respective Teachers,” beg leave to submit the following Report:—

As the Petitioners had said in their Petition that there were objections to the present arrangement of the Harvard School of a strong, serious, and decisive character, without specifying in any way what those objections were, it was decided at the first meeting of your Committee, to request the Petitioners to hand in a written statement of these objections. A Letter, previously prepared by the Chairman of the Committee, was accordingly addressed to Mr. William Eager, whose name was at the head of the Petitioners. It was also agreed to send a circular which had been prepared by the Chairman of the Committee, to the Masters of the Grammar Schools of the City, requesting, in a series of questions, their opinions of the result of the change in the arrangement of the Schools. Copies of the letter to Mr. Eager, and of the Circular to the Masters, are herewith given, and they, together with the “brief summary of reasons,” handed in by the Petitioners in reply to the letter to Mr. Eager, and the answers of the several Masters to the Circular, are annexed hereto and made a part of this Report.

In the consideration of the subject-matter of the Petition, the majority of your Committee have endeavored to examine candidly the arguments in favor of, and those against, the present arrangement of the Grammar Schools in this city, and of the old arrangement, to which, for convenience sake, they have given the names of the Mixed System, and the Separate System; and they have come to their con-

clusion partly from those reasons which the nature of the case must suggest to every one ; partly from their personal experience in Schools and in the oversight of Schools, and partly from the authority and experience of Teachers and friends of Education. This authority and experience must be co-extensive with the spread of Education and the existence of Teachers. But this it would be impossible, even if it were desirable, to obtain. That which the majority of your Committee would now present to the Board, consists of the replies of the Masters of the Grammar Schools in this city to the Circular of your Committee, and the answers of some of the Masters of the Salem Schools, to a communication from a member of your Committee. The reply of a gentleman of Boston, of much experience in Education, to a similar communication, is also given. It should, however, be stated that the only *written* authority of Teachers, &c., before the *whole* Committee, was that of the Masters of the Grammar Schools in this city, although the substance of the opinions of the Salem Teachers, as derived from personal interviews with them, was mentioned in committee. The letters, the replies to which are herewith presented for the information of the Board, and connected by the majority of the Committee with their Report, were addressed to the Salem Teachers after the last meeting of the whole Committee, in order to present their opinions to the Board in an authentic and definite form ; and letters were sent to the Salem Teachers particularly, because Mixed Schools have been for a long time in operation in that city, a place in many respects like Charlestown.

As these letters are all before your Board, and as they will be read for your information, the majority of your Committee do not think it necessary to state in detail the different means of information which the different teachers have had, or the different conclusions to which they arrive. The majority of your Committee would only say generally, and once for all, that in their opinion, both as respects more extended sources of information and a larger experience, the weight of authority is decidedly against the Mixed System, and in favor of the Separate System.

The arguments adduced in favor of the Mixed System are, that it favors discipline, making the Schools more easy to be governed ;—that it stimulates both sexes to exertion and increases the amount of study, and that it renders both sexes more chaste and circumspect in their language, and more attentive to their dress and personal appearance.

This statement embraces, so far as the majority of your Committee recollect, the arguments in favor of the Mixed System, and these they propose to examine briefly, in detail.

And first, as regards discipline. It cannot be said that heretofore the

discipline has been bad in the Schools of Charlestown, or that good order is not now kept in the Schools of Boston, and of other places where the Separate System prevails. The first thing to be taught in any School is obedience. The Master who does not teach obedience, or who fails in government, is not fit to be a Master. Obedience must be taught as a fixed principle and rule, and must be required unhesitatingly and implicitly of all scholars, whether boys or girls, whether in Mixed or in Separate Schools. The argument, then, that the Mixed System favors discipline, has little or no weight in settling the question at issue, for perfect discipline can be kept and is kept, in Separate Schools, and the difficulties in the way of discipline are such that a teacher who could not keep a Separate School in discipline, could not control a Mixed School. Indeed, the argument does not state that the Mixed System is *necessary* to discipline, but only that it *favors* discipline. On this point, the majority of your Committee believe that the Mixed System renders the discipline more difficult, for two reasons. It gives incitement and opportunity for the commission of offences which are the inevitable result of the union of the sexes in the same room, that would never be thought of in Separate Schools, and at the same time it makes the punishment of all offences more difficult, from the different modes of discipline necessary for the two sexes. If a boy and girl commit the same offence, it may be necessary to use the rod upon the boy, while a different punishment would produce the desired effect upon the girl. If the teacher makes a difference between the sexes in the punishment of the same offence, he is accused of partiality, and the punishment loses most of its effect; while, if he makes the flesh of the girl quiver under the rod or the ferule, he is liable to be charged with undue severity. The majority of your Committee would subject neither the discipline of the Schools to such peril, nor the Masters to such an unpleasant alternative.

Secondly. The argument that it stimulates both sexes to exertion and increases the amount of study, is thought to be untrue in its full extent, and it is considered one that, from the necessary evils consequent upon it, should have no decisive influence in favor of the Mixed System. The argument must be founded upon this,—that the best scholars of a class help on the poorer ones, and that as a general rule, girls of a certain age are quicker to learn and better scholars than boys of the same age, and so, if put in a class of boys, will aid the class. The principle here stated is undoubtedly correct, but it is incorrectly applied. Good scholars in a class do help the poorer ones; but it is not necessary that all the good scholars should be girls, and that the poor ones should be boys; nor is it invariably the case that the good scholars are girls, and that the poor ones are boys. The working of the

principle is as satisfactory and as advantageous, where the two grades of scholars in a class are of the same sex, as where they are of different sexes ; and the reason, in the opinion of the majority of your Committee, why the two grades of scholars may as well be of the same sex, is, that any peculiar influence of the different sexes that may be relied on as the immediate consequence of the Mixed System, will fail when the novelty of the affair is worn off, and when the sexes are accustomed to each other's presence from their first entrance into the primary schools. But there is another side to this question. In the same proportion that the boys are helped, the girls will be injured, for the influence is reciprocal ; and where the good scholars help the poor ones, the poor ones are a drawback and a weight upon the advancement of the good ones. And, in the opinion of the majority of your Committee, no advantage should be sought for the one sex which brings with it an equal and corresponding evil to the other sex.

The argument that the Mixed System makes both sexes more chaste and circumspect in their language, must have reference to the deportment of the sexes *out* of the school-room, if it has reference to any thing ; for, *in* the school-room, the only language permitted is that of the recitation, where answers are given to the questions of the Master ; and it is not easily seen how, in the recitations in Schools under the Separate System, under the eye and in the hearing of the Master, there can be any improprieties of speech or manner which the presence of pupils of the other sex would be necessary to correct or improve. But if the argument has reference to the language of the play-ground or street, the majority of your Committee have not yet been shown how the intermixture of the sexes makes either sex more chaste or circumspect in its language or manners, while engaged in the rough plays of thoughtless childhood.

So in regard to the remaining reason assigned in favor of the Mixed System. If the children of the different sexes are neat and attentive to their personal appearance because they are to be seen by the other sex, and for this reason only, a low and unworthy inducement is held out to the sexes for the formation of these important habits, while, as the principle can act only in the presence of the two sexes, it must be inoperative when they are separated, and the opposite habits might be formed. Besides it is by no means admitted that habits of neatness cannot be formed in separate schools, and that they have not been so formed in previous years. It is not known that there has been any complaint upon this subject. The majority of your Committee are of opinion that under the Mixed System there would be but few, if any, instances in these respects, and they think that it may well be questioned whether the feeling that makes boys or girls, who when

in separate Schools were untidy and inattentive to their personal appearance, suddenly go to the other extreme, does not arise from a disposition to gallantry which no parent could wish to see fostered in our public Schools.

If, as the majority of your Committee believe, the above opinions and reasoning are correct, the arguments adduced in favor of the Mixed System are inconclusive, and open to objections which utterly destroy their weight.

But, besides, there are objections to the Mixed System which the majority of your Committee believe the Petitioners have rightly described in their "brief summary of reasons," as being of a strong, serious and decisive character. The majority of your Committee would refer generally to that "brief summary" and will also briefly state the objections to the Mixed System which press most strongly and decisively upon their minds.

And first in respect to Instruction. The difficulties which present themselves in regard to discipline have been heretofore stated—and now the objections are given in respect to Instruction purely. In the opinion of the majority of your Committee a wise plan of Education points out a different course of Instruction for the different sexes. They believe with the Petitioners that girls should not be instructed as though they were to be our "future engineers, merchants, navigators, lawgivers and rulers," but that they should be so taught as to perform appropriately the peculiar duties of their sex. The majority of your Committee do not think it necessary to enlarge upon this point; for they suppose that its truth is generally admitted. Nor do they consider that by the establishment of the High School for advanced scholars, the force of this argument is materially weakened, for they have always understood that the establishment of the High School was not intended to degrade the Grammar Schools. At any rate the argument will apply in its full force to a large class of scholars who will, from necessity, receive all their Education in the Grammar Schools. And if the course of Instruction for the different sexes ought to be different, the separate system is the only one that can be used to advantage. Another difficulty in the Schools under the Mixed System, will arise from the nature of some of the studies taught. It is thought to be the universal opinion that Physiology, for instance, should be taught to some extent at least in all the Grammar Schools. No prudent teacher would venture to instruct boys and girls in this subject in the same class, or even in the same room.

Secondly, in respect to morals. Here the majority of your Committee think that the effect of the Mixed System is decidedly bad. In small schools in towns of sparse population, and even in country

villages where the scholars and the parents of the scholars are all known to each other, the evils may be less felt, and more easily corrected. But in the large Schools of densely populated maritime cities, which it is alike the boast and glory of our Common School System are open to all, where children of every grade and those subject to all sorts of influences at home meet together, the evils necessary to the Mixed System are greatly increased. The majority of your Committee will state what some of these moral evils are. No one who knows boys, it is thought, can deny, that, as a general rule, by the time they reach the age of twelve years, and with many at a much earlier period, they have become familiar with the common words of vulgarity, obscenity and profanity—with the last perhaps to a less extent. How far this evil extends, in reference to the first two vices, to the other sex no definite opinion is ventured, but it is feared that the contamination is more deeply spread than is generally supposed. It is also believed to be true that a large proportion of the words of vulgarity and obscenity have reference to sexual differences; and that these words are nowhere spoken more freely and unblushingly than when children are collected in large numbers as at schools, and they rarely collect in so large numbers elsewhere. The constant, daily, presence of the other sex is continually recalling these sexual peculiarities, and the impure ideas associated with them. And certainly in the opinion of the majority of your Committee, neither sex should be unnecessarily exposed to this peril. The impurity will exist, it is to be feared, in separate schools, but it may slumber at times, while in schools under the Mixed System, the flame is constantly fed. These evils exist even when no improper words or communications pass between the sexes, and when such communication is had the evil is increased. That such communication is had, even in spite of the vigilance of the most faithful master, it is not doubted. Discoveries are made by the teacher rarely, while the successful instances of deception are known, if not to the School at large, at least to the little coterie around the wrong doer. The effect of these illicit communications both upon discipline and morals is equally demoralizing.

There are other objections to the Mixed System which, from their delicacy, cannot be urged in a written report with the precision and distinctness to which they are entitled. The Board cannot fail to perceive, however, that embarrassment to both teachers and pupils may arise from causes over which nature alone has control.

The above conclusions of themselves would be sufficient to convince the majority of your Committee that the prayer of the Petitioners should be granted. They also present another consideration for a re-

turn to the old, or Separate System, which, in their opinion, would be conclusive in a case even more nicely balanced than the present, and that is, the wishes, temperately and strongly stated, of so large a proportion of the residents in the Harvard District. Whatever evil may result from the Mixed System, will fall on them through their children, and their warning voice should certainly be heard, when they would attempt to avert the impending danger.

The majority of your Committee, therefore, recommend that the prayer of the Petitioners be granted, and that the boys occupy one room of the Harvard School House, and the girls the other, under their respective Teachers.

Respectfully submitted,

CHAS. W. MOORE, } *Majority of the*  
GEO. P. SANGER, } *Committee.*

*Charlestown, May 24th, 1848.*



## APPENDIX TO MAJORITY REPORT.

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### CORRESPONDENCE WITH PETITIONERS.

CHARLESTOWN, MAY 1, 1848.

DEAR SIR:

The petition from yourself and others to the School Committee of this City, to change the existing school arrangement, so far as that the girls in the Harvard School may occupy one of the rooms and the boys the other, has been referred to a sub-committee. This sub-committee will be happy to avail of any information that you possess upon the subject and which you may be pleased to communicate in writing. Especially will it be obliged, if you will inform it what those objections to the present plan which you deem of a "strong, serious and decisive character," are.

I am, dear Sir,

Your obt. servt.,

In behalf of the sub-committee,

(Signed,) SETH J. THOMAS.

W.M. EAGER, Esq.,  
Present.

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CHARLESTOWN, MAY 8th, 1848.

*To the School Committee of the City of Charlestown:*

GENTLEMEN—Some of the inhabitants of Ward No. 1, petitioners for the restoration of the former mode of instructing children by a separation of the sexes, ask leave to present to you in aid of their petition, a very brief summary of the reasons which have induced them at this time to press the matter upon the serious consideration of your Board.

They object to the *new* plan of uniting the boys and girls in the *same* departments and classes for instruction;

1st. Because it is a variation from a known, well-tried and well-approved method of instruction in cities and other places of dense

## ANSWERS TO THE FOREGOING QUESTIONS.

CHARLESTOWN, MAY 3, 1848.

DEAR SIR:—Yours was received yesterday afternoon. Before answering the questions proposed, allow me to say, that my experience in Mixed Schools has been in the country, and conclusions formed there may not be thought valuable here.

Still, in the short trial since our change was made, I have seen no reason to modify former opinions, and can frankly say,—

I think the union of boys and girls in the same room tends to good order and government in the school; and that the influence upon the habits, manners and morals of the two sexes is favorable, rather than otherwise.

I do not know any decisive objections to this arrangement.

The experience of so short a time cannot furnish very valuable data, but I see no reasons for a change.

I am, dear sir, your ob't serv't,

C. S. PENNELL.

SETH J. THOMAS, Esq.

Charlestown, Mass.

WARREN SCHOOL, No. 2, CHARLESTOWN, MAY 3, 1848.

DEAR SIR,—Your inquiries, addressed to me in a note of the 1st inst., have been received; and in answer to the first, I will state, that the order of my school has improved, and it is more easily disciplined than formerly,—whether in consequence of the union of the sexes or otherwise, I am not able to say.

2d. In regard to its influence on the manners, habits and morals of the pupils, sufficient time has not elapsed, to enable me to determine with much accuracy, but I have seen nothing unfavorable thus far.

3d. I have seen no “strong, serious and decisive objections” to this plan, that could not be urged as strongly, seriously and decisively, against any other plan of school organization.

4th. In the limited experience that I have had, under this plan, in the Warren School, I have seen nothing to satisfy me that a change should be made.

Respectfully, your ob't serv't,

JOSEPH T. SWAN,

*Prin. Warren School, No. 2.*

SETH J. THOMAS, Esq.

CHARLESTOWN, MAY 6th, 1848.

DEAR SIR,—In answer to the questions proposed in your note of the 1st inst., I would say—

1st. That, in my opinion, the union of the boys and girls in the same room, *does* tend to good order and government in the schools.

2d. That the influence of this union upon “the manners, habits and morals of the two sexes, so far as I have observed,” *is*, in general, decidedly favorable.

3d. There are, as I think, no serious objections to it.

4th. I am satisfied that this union should be continued.

I am, Sir, with great respect,

Your humble servant,

WM. C. BRADLEE,

Col. S. J. THOMAS,

Member of Com'tee of Charlestown Free Schools.

CHARLESTOWN, MAY 8, 1848.

SETH J. THOMAS, Esq.,—*Dear Sir:*—In answer to the questions contained in your note of the 1st inst., I reply, that from the results of my own experience and observation, I believe the presence of each sex in a school, as every where else, has, to some extent, a restraining and salutary influence upon the other,—and thus tends, indirectly at least, to good order and government.

I will not say that the evils of improper communication may not arise in a school thus organized; but I believe their occurrence will not be more frequent than where the sexes are separated,—while the remedy may be applied much more readily, and with more efficiency in the former than in the latter.

Viewing the subject in this light, I must say, that I believe “its influence upon the manners, habits and morals of the two sexes” to be favorable; that I know of no “strong, serious and decisive objections” to it; and that my experience under this plan has been such as to satisfy me that it had better be continued—in my own school, at least.

I am yours, very respectfully,

B. F. TWEED.

CHARLESTOWN, MAY 8, 1848.

DEAR SIR,—In replying to the questions in your favor of last week, I would say—

1. That in my judgment, the union of both sexes in the same school-room, *does* tend to good order and government in the school.
2. That its influence upon the manners, habits and morals of the two sexes, *is*, so far as I have observed, favorable.
3. That in my opinion, there are no strong, serious and *decisive* objections to it.
4. An experience of eight years, under this plan, satisfies me that it had better be continued.

I am, dear Sir, yours, very respectfully,

WM. S. WILLIAMS.

Col. SETH J. THOMAS.

CHARLESTOWN, MAY 10th, 1848.

DEAR SIR,—I take pleasure in submitting to you the following reply to the questions proposed in your communication of May 1st.

It is generally admitted, I believe, that the presence of either sex naturally operates as a restraint upon the other, and so far as my experience serves me, the principle applies to the reciprocal influence of children of different sexes in the same room. I should, therefore, say, that “the union of boys and girls in the same school room, tends to good order and government in the school.”

The society of the sexes at school will serve, I have no doubt, to modify the deportment of each, mutually inciting both to habits of neatness in their personal appearance, and rendering them more circumspect and chaste in their language and manners; and since by the present system, they are directly under the eye of one instructor, and wholly within his jurisdiction, should any improper communication between them, sometimes occur, a more favorable opportunity is afforded for detection and remedy, than if they were in separate rooms and accountable to different teachers. I am led to conclude, therefore, that “the influence of the union upon the manners, habits and morals of the two sexes,” is favorable.

If the above opinion is correct, I am, of course, unable to see any "strong, serious and decisive objections" to the system recently established; and my experience thus far of its effects, has not "been such as to satisfy" me "that it had better be changed."

Yours, respectfully,

STACY BAXTER.

SETH J. THOMAS, Esq.

CHARLESTOWN, MAY 12, 1848.

DEAR SIR,—In reply to your note of May 1, I would say,—

1. I think that the union of boys and girls in the same school-room, does tend to good order and government.
2. Its influence upon the manners, habits and morals, is not, in my opinion, generally favorable.
3. The greatest objection to the system is its moral tendency.
4. If children [of both sexes] must attend school in the same *building*, I should prefer to have them in the same *room* also.

Yours, respectfully,

J. P. AVERILL.

SETH J. THOMAS, Esq.

## QUESTIONS PROPOSED TO TEACHERS IN SALEM.

- 1st. "How long have you been a teacher in a Mixed Public School in Salem?"
- 2d. "Is the presence of both sexes conducive to better order and government than could otherwise be secured?"
- 3d. "Does it stimulate either sex to increased study and industry?"
- 4th. "Does it, *or not*, tend to the improvement of the *morals* and *manners* of either sex?"
- 5th. "Is your opinion generally favorable to the system of Mixed Schools and would you recommend them as preferable to others?"

## ANSWERS TO THE ABOVE.

SALEM, 20th MAY, 1848.

CHAS. W. MOORE, Esq.,

DEAR SIR,—Your favor of yesterday is before me, and I will endeavor to answer your interrogatories as distinctly as I can in the very limited time I can now devote to them. I will copy your questions and follow each with such remarks as I may think pertinent.

1st. "How long have you been a Teacher in a Mixed Public School in Salem?" Upwards of seven years, and during the five years immediately preceding I was engaged in a similar School in the adjoining town of Danvers.

2d. "Is the presence of both sexes conducive to better order and gov-

ernment than could otherwise be secured?" As a whole, I think not. Under question fourth or fifth I will say more bearing on this point.

3d. "Does it stimulate either sex to increased study and industry?" It may, and probably does, a certain number of the older pupils, but I think not generally. If scholars of the different sexes are brought together, for the first time, at the age of 12 or 14 years, I doubt not that the relation might tend to stimulate greater interest in the preparation of School exercises, but if they come together and remain together, from the commencement of their School days, I think but little if any benefit would accrue from the particular under consideration.

4th. "Does it, or not, tend to the improvement of the *morals* and *manners* of either sex?" I do not know that I feel prepared to give my opinion very decidedly on this point. In some particulars the union may exert a favorable influence, but I cannot say that I think it, as a whole, very beneficial. *Good* boys and girls might mutually encourage and stimulate each other, but I very much doubt if heedless or lewd boys and girls would be improved; and one or two of this latter class, of either sex, will exert a most deleterious influence upon a whole school.

In my own experience I have never had any *marked* cases which would decidedly aid me in coming to a very definite conclusion on this point. I have, in one or two instances, detected slight deviations from the path of modesty and propriety, but as a whole we have had no cause for complaint.

5th. "Is your opinion generally favorable to the system of Mixed Schools and would you recommend them as preferable to others?" Not universally. In country towns and small villages there may be no special objection to a union of the sexes in school. Convenience renders it desirable, if not necessary, in many places.

In a city, as compact as yours, I think, *all things considered*, I should decide in favor of a separation of the sexes. The modes of discipline necessary for the different sexes are often unlike, and if the boys are sometimes kept under a wholesome restraint by the presence of the gentler sex, I am inclined to think that the latter are oftener injured by the somewhat rude and unpolished deportment, added to the stern treatment sometimes called for on the part of some boys; in other words, the influence, if favorable, is so only to the boys and then at too great sacrifice on the part of the girls.

Again, in matters of instruction, there is, often, a difference in the two sexes. This difference extends not only to the branches to be pursued, but also to the degree of interest with which the same studies may be pursued by the different sexes. As a general thing, I think girls are much more easily influenced and interested than boys, and those means which would sufficiently stimulate them, might scarcely make any impression upon the boys. The advantages of union of the sexes in school, if any, are wholly in favor of the boys, and, I fear, to the detriment of the girls. There are, however, arguments on "both sides of the question," and I only regret that I cannot give you my own views more fully and more decidedly. Pressing engagements have obliged me to write in great haste, and without much consideration of the subject. As my experience has been confined, almost entirely to Mixed Schools, perhaps I ought not to speak *very* decidedly, but still I am inclined to favor the separation of the sexes in schools where local circumstances will admit of it.

In great haste, very respectfully,

CHAS. NORTHEND.

BROWNE SCHOOL, SALEM, MAY 20, 1848.

C. W. MOORE, Esq.—*Dear Sir* :—I think you, with others from Charlestown, were in my school a short time since, when the subject of Mixed Schools was mentioned. I think I gave my opinion at that time. I commenced teaching in Salem, seventeen years ago, in a school of boys, and remained in it for two years; then I was transferred to a school of girls, where I remained twelve years, when our Committee thought fit to commit the care of the Female Schools to Female Principals, with Assistants. I was then placed over the Mixed School, where I now am.

I am of the opinion that schools do best, both in a moral and intellectual view, where only one sex attend. Some suppose that the presence of girls has a softening and refining tendency with the boys. This may be the case, to some extent; but I think the counteracting influence of the boys, on the moral feelings of the girls, more than balances the good derived from having both sexes in the same school.

Girls are more easily governed than boys, and I think that good discipline is maintained at less expense in a school of boys exclusively, than in a school of both sexes. So strong are my convictions in the case, that I have requested the Committee to put a partition wall through my room, and make two schools—one of girls, the other of boys exclusively. I will take charge of the boys, with one assistant, and a female take charge of the girls.

Very respectfully, yours,

J. B. FAIRFIELD.

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SALEM, MAY 20, 1848.

Mr. MOORE,

DEAR SIR,—Your note of yesterday's date I have received this afternoon, and will return an immediate answer.

1st. I have been a Teacher in a School for both sexes, in Salem, since 1836.

2d. I am fully satisfied that both sexes in the same school-room, can be more easily controlled and are capable of better government, with the same effort on the part of a Teacher, than would be either sex alone.

3d. To your third inquiry I cannot say yes without some qualification. It is well known to all observant of childhood, that some pupils are neither stimulated by one set of circumstances or by another, and must, in fact, be permitted to move onward with a uniform and *very* moderate motion. But I think, on the whole, the presence of both sexes is productive of a limited increase of study.

4th. Your fourth inquiry is one which claims from all of us the utmost consideration, inasmuch as the conclusion to which we arrive upon this point *alone*, should, in my opinion, decide us to act in favor of, or in opposition to, Mixed Schools.

I have not the slightest belief that the morals or manners of any child, male or female, who has been a member of my school, have been at all impaired by the agency of any principle or circumstance peculiar to Mixed Schools.

In the school under my care, the sexes are not merely in the same room, but are intermixed. We have double desks, each of which is occupied by a boy and girl. It is readily seen that this mode of seating pupils secures to us the double advantage of placing together children of dissimilar propensities, habits or tastes, and also of placing together the different sexes; the object of which is to stimulate what is good, or to repress what is evil. Such, in fact, is the actual result as found by experience, that I have no desire to return to a separation of the sexes to different rooms, or to different parts of the same room.

The tendency to whisper—an immoral tendency—is much restrained,

o<sup>t</sup>entimes utterly broken down ; whilst the manners of the boys, if in some instances tending to coarseness, receive an impression from girls highly favorable, without communicating anything mischievous instead. I know of many instances where boys and girls have manifestly received valuable aid to both morals and manners, by this intermixture of the sexes.

No person needs to be reminded of the convenience attendant upon the fact, that all the members, male and female, can go to the same school from the same family.

Custom, too, that silent but omnipotent monitor, which alike sustains the *peculiar* institutions of republics and despotisms, is much in favor of Mixed Schools. If we look at the schools of New England, how many can be found where both sexes are not mixed ? And further, if the sexes must be separated at school, why not be uniform, and carry this separation into churches, coaches, railroad cars, and even to the very streets themselves ?

From the remarks made, I necessarily come to the conclusion, that boys and girls should, under ordinary circumstances, constitute a school.

I am, very respectfully,

Your humble servant,

ALBERT LACKEY.

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## LETTER FROM WM. B. FOWLE, Esq.

138½ WASHINGTON STREET, BOSTON, MAY 19, 1848.

CHARLES W. MOORE, Esq.

MY DEAR SIR,—In answer to your inquiry what my opinion is of the plan of instructing the two sexes in the presence of each other, I frankly say, that I consider it injudicious, if not positively injurious, and if you ask me why I think so, I reply :—

1. That my *experience* has satisfied me that it is safer to separate them.
2. The opinion of many of the best teachers in the country, *who are married*, coincides with my own. At Teachers' Institutes I have made this a subject of special inquiry.
3. The subjects taught to the two sexes should be materially different, and some subjects can be taught to one sex in the absence of the other, that cannot be so well taught when they are together. This is evident where males teach boys, and females girls.
4. The discipline required by the two sexes is so different that the teacher who makes the proper distinction will certainly lose his character for impartiality. On no other ground than this can I account for the barbarous practice of striking females as boys are punished.
5. The sentimentalism that I sometimes hear, about the civilizing influence of the gentler sex over the other, is contradicted by my observation and experience. Mischief arises ten times as often as any good is done by this intercourse.
6. In all Mixed Schools there will be some impure minds of both sexes, and their active influence will do far more evil than the quiet example of good ones will do good. Prevention is the key to discipline and good morals.
7. Boys will use bad language in the presence of girls, whether these incline to hear it or not. They will do indelicate things to show their spirit. They will have their favorite girls, and these will flirt at a very

early age. Signs will be adopted, and letters interchanged, and assignations often made. This I have known to be carried to a great extent in some Academies, which are usually Mixed Schools.

9. Very many judicious parents will not allow their daughters to go to Mixed Schools, and yet these are the very children that we wish to draw into the Public Schools.

10. Most male Teachers prefer to teach girls, and they rarely advise a separation, if the girls are to be removed from under their care. *Ex-  
teachers are the best advisers.*

When the children are under seven years of age, the danger is lessened but not removed. Things are seen, and said, and done, even in these Primary Schools, which leave a permanent stain upon the mind, especially if the yard and the privy are common to the two sexes.

Any one who knows me will know that these opinions do not arise from any austerity of character, or any preciseness of manners. I know what I saw at school when I was young, I know what I saw for twenty-one years while I was a Teacher, I know what other Teachers have told me, and what has been told me by my pupils, and yet I believe no School ever possessed a higher tone of morality than mine.

I should be glad to copy these remarks, and enlarge upon each, but I have not time, and your own good sense will anticipate much of what I should say. Yours, very respectfully,

WM. B. FOWLE.

## C O U N T E R R E P O R T.

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THE undersigned, from the sub-committee to whom was referred the petition of William Eager and others, for a change in the existing plan of school organization, so far as relates to the Harvard schools, by separating the sexes now in those schools, so as to make one school of the boys and another of the girls, dissenting from the other two members, submits the following counter

### R E P O R T.

The plan of uniting boys and girls in the same school room was presented for the first time formally to the notice of the board, at a meeting on the first day of February of this year,—though attention had been directed to it, as is already known to several members of this committee, some time previously. It was then presented as a part of a general plan for the re-organization of the grammar schools. By general consent, it was laid aside at that meeting, to be taken up and acted upon at the next. The next meeting was held on the fifteenth of the same month, and was a special one, called chiefly with a view to another matter. This proposition was, however, taken up and discussed, but no vote was taken upon it. The meeting was adjourned to the eighteenth. At the meeting on the eighteenth, the subject was again taken up and considered. A committee was appointed to organize the Harvard, Winthrop and Warren schools into six separate and independent schools ; but still the question whether boys and girls were to be in the same school room was not determined. The meeting was adjourned to the twentythird of the same month. At this meeting on the twentythird, after a lengthy discussion upon the question, and the reading of letters from several eminent teachers and others relating to it, it was voted, that “when the Harvard, Warren and Winthrop schools be reorganized into six separate and independent schools, they be composed each of both sexes.” On this question, there were, in the affirmative, eight ; in the negative, three. At the meeting on the fifteenth, when the proposition

was first considered, the whole board was present; at that on the eighteenth, all but one member; and at that on the twentythird, when the vote was taken, every member. The undersigned deems these details important to show that the action of the late board was not hasty and inconsiderate. The measure was determined upon with great deliberation and after much inquiry and discussion; and upon a careful review of the objections urged by these same petitioners, a month afterward, it was voted, seven to four, to adhere to it. Such is the history of this measure in the late board. When this board entered upon its duties, it found the plan in operation.

The petition referred to the sub-committee contained simply an averment. It declared, that no good could come of the present arrangement, and that the objections to it were of a "strong, serious and decisive character;" but it alleged no reason in support of the declaration. The undersigned, therefore, prepared a letter to Mr. Eager, the first signer of the petition, informing him that the sub-committee to whom his petition had been referred, would be happy to avail of any knowledge that he possessed upon the subject, and which he might be pleased to communicate in writing; and that they would be especially obliged if he would inform them what those objections to the present plan which the petitioners deemed of a "strong, serious and decisive character" were. This letter was submitted to the sub-committee, and being approved, was sent to Mr. Eager; and some seven or eight days afterward, the undersigned received from that gentleman a statement in aid of the petition, which here follows. At the same meeting of the sub-committee, the undersigned submitted a circular letter addressed to each of the principal teachers in the grammar schools, proposing certain interrogatories in respect of the union of boys and girls in the same school room, which being also approved, was transmitted. The inquiries propounded, together with the replies of the teachers, are subjoined to the statement from the petitioners.

STATEMENT IN AID OF THE PETITION.

CHARLESTOWN, MAY 8th, 1848.

*To the School Committee of the City of Charlestown:*

**GENTLEMEN**—Some of the inhabitants of Ward No. 1, petitioners for the restoration of the former mode of instructing children by a separation of the sexes, ask leave to present to you in aid of their petition, a very brief summary of the reasons which have induced them at this time to press the matter upon the serious consideration of your Board.

They object to the *new* plan of uniting the boys and girls in the *same* departments and classes for instruction;

1st. Because it is a variation from a known, well-tried and well-approved method of instruction in cities and other places of dense population, which in their opinion, is uncalled for by any consideration of economy, convenience, or good order.

2d. Because, it defeats the object of a good and appropriate education for females, by training them in the same manner and in the same studies and classes, as if they were destined to be, like boys, our future engineers, navigators, merchants, legislators and governors. A different course of instruction and discipline, as it seems to the petitioners, would better prepare girls for those duties of life, to which they must inevitably be called.

3d. Because, from eight to fourteen, an age, the most important and the most dangerous, as well as the most susceptible of impressions, there is demanded for girls, that watchful care, that attention to sexual differences, that jealous guarding of mental and physical purity, which it is believed, cannot be had in a Mixed School;—and because at this period, an age of bold and unsuspecting confidence, girls, if not checked by prudent counsel, would as readily engage with *all* their schoolmates in the rough plays of the streets, as in the exercises proper to their sex and character.

4th. Because, the modesty of the female, so essential to the purity of her early years, is, in Mixed Schools, unavoidably exposed to rude assaults by writings, allusions and intercourse, which no vigilance can fully prevent. It may be said that some girls are guilty of using improper terms and expressions; but such girls have little influence with their own sex, unless countenanced and encouraged by rude male companions. Besides, coarse, vulgar, obscene and profane expressions become doubly injurious to the moral purity of the young, when uttered in the presence of both sexes, who stand in the relation of schoolmates and companions. Again, vicious girls, it is believed, when they are permitted to associate with the other sex, have a tendency to corrupt their minds and thus both sexes are injured by the intimacy unavoidably produced by Mixed Schools. In some instances, too, it becomes necessary to give admonitions to one sex, which no judicious Teacher would administer in the presence of the other.

5th. Because, at a period when the mind receives its deepest impressions, a Mixed School is fatal to that careful choice, that selection of worthy and suitable companions, which is especially necessary for girls, as the instincts, which draw the sexes together, begin to make their first developments. A mistake at this period, which care and prudence may prevent, often becomes a source of lasting misery.

6th. Because a large and respectable number of Tax-payers in Ward No. 1, have such conscientious objections to the new plan of instruction, as must deprive them of the benefits of the Public Schools to a great extent and inflict upon them an injury, to which, if the old plan be returned to, *none* can be exposed. The petitioners are unwilling to leave the impression upon your minds that the present plan will, in their opinion, prove injurious to the *girls* alone;—far otherwise. They believe it will be detrimental to both sexes. Whatever is injurious to the moral purity of the one, will become so to the other. In society they act and re-act upon each other. It may be proper here to remind the Committee that many of the petitioners have sons and daughters, and others, sons only, to attend the school.

Such are some of the objections which have induced your petitioners to ask you to change the present system of instruction in the Harvard School. They are believed by them to be of a "*strong, serious and decisive character.*" Other reasons might be adduced in their esti-

mation equally convincing: these they intended to bring forward had they been allowed a personal hearing; but they forbear, in the full belief that you will review the whole subject, and decide according to your convictions, upon such a course as shall be most beneficial to the School.

For the Petitioners—Yours, Respectfully,

(Signed,) WM. EAGER,

A. ANDREWS,

CHAS. THOMPSON,

HENRY FORSTER,

EDWARD LAWRENCE,

GEORGE E. ELLIS,

JOHN SKILTON.

QUESTIONS PROPOSED TO THE PRINCIPAL TEACHERS.

1. "Does the union of boys and girls in the same school room tend to good order and government in the school, or otherwise ?
2. Is its influence upon the manners, habits and morals of the two sexes, so far as you have observed, favorable, or otherwise ?
3. Are there, in your judgment, "strong, serious and decisive objections" to it ? And, if so, what are they ?
4. Has the experience that you have thus far had under this plan been such as to satisfy you that it had better be continued, or should it be changed ?"

REPLIES OF THE TEACHERS.

CHARLESTOWN, MAY 8, 1848.

SETH J. THOMAS, Esq.,—*Dear Sir:*—In answer to the questions contained in your note of the 1st inst., I reply, that from the results of my own experience and observation, I believe the presence of each sex in a school, as every where else, has, to some extent, a restraining and salutary influence upon the other,—and thus tends, indirectly at least, to good order and government.

I will not say that the evils of improper communication may not arise in a school thus organized; but I believe their occurrence will not be more frequent than where the sexes are separated,—while the remedy may be applied much more readily, and with more efficiency in the former than in the latter.

Viewing the subject in this light, I must say, that I believe "its influence upon the manners, habits and morals of the two sexes" to be favorable; that I know of no "strong, serious and decisive objections" to it; and that my experience under this plan has been such as to satisfy me that it had better be continued, in my own school, at least.

I am, yours, very respectfully,

B. F. TWEED.

CHARLESTOWN, MAY 10th, 1848.

DEAR SIR,—I take pleasure in submitting to you the following reply to the questions proposed in your communication of May 1st.

It is generally admitted, I believe, that the presence of either sex naturally operates as a restraint upon the other, and so far as my experience serves me, the principle applies to the reciprocal influence of children of different sexes in the same room. I should, therefore, say, that "the

union of boys and girls in the same school room, tends to good order and government in the school."

The society of the sexes at school will serve, I have no doubt, to modify the deportment of each, mutually inciting both to habits of neatness in their personal appearance, and rendering them more circumspect and chaste in their language and manners; and since by the present system, they are directly under the eye of one instructer, and wholly within his jurisdiction, should any improper communication between them, sometimes occur, a more favorable opportunity is afforded for detection and remedy, than if they were in separate rooms and accountable to different teachers. I am led to conclude, therefore, that "the influence of the union upon the manners, habits and morals of the two sexes," is favorable.

If the above opinion is correct, I am, of course, unable to see any "strong, serious and decisive objections" to the system recently established; and my experience thus far of its effects, has not "been such as to satisfy" me "that it had better be changed."

Yours, respectfully,

STACY BAXTER.

SETH J. THOMAS, Esq.

CHARLESTOWN, MAY 6th, 1848.

DEAR SIR,—In answer to the questions proposed in your note of the 1st inst., I would say—

1st. That, in my opinion, the union of the boys and girls in the same room, *does* tend to good order and government in the schools.

2d. That the influence of this union upon "the manners, habits and morals of the two sexes, so far as I have observed," *is*, in general, decidedly favorable.

3d. There are, as I think, no serious objections to it.

4th. I am satisfied that this union should be continued.

I am, Sir, with great respect,

Your humble servant,

WM. C. BRADLEE.

Col. S. J. THOMAS,

Member of Com. of Charlestown Free Schools.

WARREN SCHOOL, No. 2, CHARLESTOWN, MAY 3, 1848.

DEAR SIR,—Your inquiries, addressed to me in a note of the 1st inst., have been received; and in answer to the first, I will state, that the order of my school has improved, and it is more easily disciplined than formerly,—whether in consequence of the union of the sexes, or otherwise, I am not able to say.

2d. In regard to its influence on the manners, habits and morals of the pupils, sufficient time has not elapsed, to enable me to determine with much accuracy, but I have seen nothing unfavorable thus far.

3d. I have seen no "strong, serious and decisive objections" to this plan, that could not be urged as strongly, seriously and decisively, against any other plan of school organization.

4th. In the limited experience that I have had, under this plan, in the Warren School, I have seen nothing to satisfy me that a change should be made.

Respectfully, your ob't serv't,

JOSEPH T. SWAN,

*Prin. Warren School, No. 2.*

SETH J. THOMAS, Esq.

CHARLESTOWN, MAY 3, 1848.

DEAR SIR:—Yours was received yesterday afternoon. Before answering the questions proposed, allow me to say, that my experience in mixed Schools has been in the country, and conclusions formed there may not be thought valuable here.

Still, in the short trial since our change was made, I have seen no reason to modify former opinions, and can frankly say,—

I think the union of boys and girls in the same room tends to good order and government in the school; and that the influence upon the habits, manners and morals of the two sexes is favorable, rather than otherwise.

I do not know any decisive objections to this arrangement.

The experience of so short a time cannot furnish very valuable data, but I see no reasons for a change.

I am, dear sir, your ob't serv't,

C. S. PENNELL.

SETH J. THOMAS, Esq.

Charlestown, Mass.

CHARLESTOWN, MAY 8, 1848.

DEAR SIR,—In replying to the questions in your favor of last week, I would say—

1. That in my judgment, the union of both sexes in the same school-room, *does* tend to good order and government in the school.
2. That its influence upon the manners, habits and morals of the two sexes, *is*, so far as I have observed, favorable.
3. That in my opinion, there are no strong, serious and *decisive* objections to it.
4. An experience of eight years, under this plan, satisfies me that it had better be continued.

I am, dear Sir, yours, very respectfully,

WM. S. WILLIAMS.

Col. SETH J. THOMAS.

CHARLESTOWN, MAY 12, 1848.

DEAR SIR,—In reply to your note of May 1, I would say,—

1. I think that the union of boys and girls in the same school-room, does tend to good order and government.
2. Its influence upon the manners, habits and morals, is not, in my opinion, generally favorable.
3. The greatest objection to the system is its moral tendency.
4. If children [of both sexes] must attend school in the same *building*, I should prefer to have them in the same *room*, also.

Yours, respectfully,

J. P. AVERILL.

SETH J. THOMAS, Esq.

It will be seen that the petitioners object, first, that the union of boys and girls in the same school room is a variation from a long-tried and well-approved method of instruction in cities and other places of dense population; which variation, is, in their opinion, uncalled for by any considerations of economy, convenience or good order. That this plan differs from the plan in operation in some cities, is indeed true; but it may with at least equal propriety be said, that the other plan varies from ours, as that ours varies from it. To suppose that

ours is by any means a new and untried plan, even in places of dense population, is a mistake. It has been in operation in nearly all New England for more than two centuries, and here in Charlestown, is as old as the settlement of the place itself. In the Bunker Hill school, it has been in uninterrupted force some seven or eight years, and always with the happiest results. The truth is, ours is the original plan, and the other the variation. But even if this objection were true, it amounts to nothing. The question is not, the undersigned believes, from what plan ours varies, or with what plan it accords, but whether it is a good plan; whether, all things considered, it is the best possible. Conformity with what has been, is of much less consequence than with what ought to be. As to the matter of economy, it has never been pretended that a less number of teachers would be required under it, or that the salaries of the teachers could be made less. It was never recommended on that ground. But there are, nevertheless, considerations of economy of a higher character which the plan is believed to favor. It will shorten the school life; it will economize time; for it not only tends to emulation and greater effort on the part of the children, but by favoring a correspondence of different orders of minds, tends, also, to the improvement of both, rendering the mastery of general principles and the acquisition of knowledge all the more easy. And by shortening the school life, it will, of course, lessen the outlay for an education, also.

The petitioners object, next, that the plan "defeats the object of a good and appropriate education for females, by training them in the same manner and in the same studies and classes, as if they were destined to be, like boys, our future engineers, navigators, merchants, legislators and governors." "A different course of instruction and discipline," they add, "would better prepare girls for those duties of life to which they must inevitably be called." The extraordinary character of this objection, leads the undersigned to doubt whether the gentlemen who signed this statement in behalf of the petitioners know what the studies taught in the grammar schools are. Take the Harvard school, for example. The studies now taught there, are, reading, spelling, writing, arithmetic, English grammar, geography, composition and American history. The undersigned had not contemplated to be called to answer the objection, from any source, that the pursuit of these, or any of them, tended to defeat the object of a good and appropriate education; nor to give assurance that the idea was not seriously entertained in the school committee to fit the girls in the Harvard school district to be our navigators, engineers and members of the legislature. That there may be no longer any

misapprehension on this point, however, it may not be unnecessary to say, that neither navigation, nor engineering, nor political economy is taught in the Harvard or either of the grammar schools. And this will also excuse the undersigned for saying, that, at the close of the last year, when there were in the Harvard school girls only, and when the scope of studies was broader than it now is, and philosophy and astronomy and algebra and geometry were embraced in the list, there were in that school, in philosophy, more than double the number in any other ; in astronomy, eleven times as many as in any other ; in algebra, four times as many ; and in geometry, the largest save one, and that the Bunker Hill, composed of both boys and girls. Yet the committee heard no complaints from the petitioners, many of whom sent their daughters there, that the objects of a good and appropriate education were in the way of being defeated. These girls then pursued all the studies that they now pursue and in the same way as now. Is it not somewhat surprising, the undersigned is constrained to ask, especially when it is considered that the petitioners were represented in the school committee by one of their number, that this objection was not thought of till now ; that these gentlemen should, just at this moment, have awoke, after so long a repose, and for the first time discovered that the study of reading and writing and arithmetic and spelling and English grammar and geography and American history and composition, in the grammar schools, tended to defeat the object of a good education, and that there was a serious project on foot in the school committee to make of their daughters, engineers, navigators and members of the legislature ?

The "different course of instruction," which the petitioners say "they believe would better prepare girls for those duties of life to which they must inevitably be called," the petitioners have not pointed out. But in any view that the undersigned is able to take of it, there appears to him difficulty in the way of this. The difficulty is,—admitting it to be desirable,—that one never knows when a child, nor do ones parents know, to what particular duties one is to be called in the course of life. Some of these girls, for instance, may, by and by, be called to be school teachers ; in which case, a knowledge of reading and writing and arithmetic, and even a pretty extensive knowledge of the latter, may be very valuable to them. Others, to be sure, may be called to do house work ; but it is hardly to be supposed that even the gentlemen who framed these objections and set their names to them, would seriously urge that as a reason for introducing the study of house work into the grammar schools, as a means of fitting them for such duties. Moreover, even if it were known in childhood to what particular sphere of duty one would be called, when grown up, the

policy of an education with reference solely or chiefly to so limited an end, may well be questioned. The object of education should rather be, to develope the mind, to draw it out, and give it scope and balance and strength, than to confine it within so narrow a compass and nurture it with so scanty means.

But again, there is danger, say the petitioners, that girls, if not checked by prudent counsel, will engage with all their schoolmates in the rough plays of the streets. The modesty of the girls will be exposed to rude assaults ; there will be coarse, obscene and profane expressions used,—doubly injurious when used in the presence of both sexes. And besides, it sometimes becomes necessary to give admonitions to one sex, which no judicious teacher would administer in the presence of the other. The undersigned admits, of course, that great care is demanded for girls at the period of life referred to ; and he is not unmindful that great care is demanded for boys, also. He agrees, that it may sometimes become necessary to give admonition to one sex which should not be given in the presence of the other. But in every such case, in his judgment, the admonition should be given to the scholar individually, and not to the class, whether composed of boys or girls or of both. But if otherwise, the plan interposes no hindrance to it. The girls are alone with the teachers every half day, for ten minutes, while the boys are at recess ; and the boys are alone with the teachers every half day, for ten minutes, while the girls are at recess ; and if it should become necessary to give admonition to either at any other time than this, nothing is easier than to detain either after the other is dismissed. The truth is, none of these objections have any thing to do with the plan or the plan with them. The plan is, simply, to unite the boys and girls in the same school room, under the control of the same teachers. Profane or obscene language cannot be used by one sex toward the other in the school room. That is impossible, or next to impossible. It is believed that not one such case has occurred in either of the seven grammar schools since the plan was put in operation. And as for the use of such language out of school, unless it can be traced to impressions or influences received in school, how is the union of the two sexes in the same school responsible for it ? It is plain to the undersigned, that the meeting of the two in school, under the control of suitable teachers, will tend to restrain rather than help to encourage impropriety of conduct at out-door meetings. And in this view, the undersigned is happy to find himself confirmed by the direct statement of both Mr. Tweed, of the Bunker Hill, and Mr. Baxter, of the Harvard schools, whose opinions, formed from careful observation and long experience, and never hastily expressed, are confessedly entitled to great weight.

Besides, one of the objects to be gained by the union is precisely that "prudent counsel" which the petitioners deem so essential. This "prudent counsel," that instruction in "good behavior," which is one of the first commands of the law in relation to our public schools, may be better and more efficiently given, in the judgment of the undersigned, in the presence of both sexes, than before each apart. In the deportment of the principal and sub-master, the boys have an ideal, a pattern, for their own deportment toward the girls, as well as toward each other; while in the deportment of the female assistant, the girls have an example for their own conduct toward the boys as well as toward each other. And in case any impropriety does occur, the remedy is much more easily applied when both are responsible to a single head. Let it still be borne in mind, that the boys and girls in the Harvard schools will meet out of school, whether separate in school or no. That must be so. If separated into two different schools, they would still go to school in the same building. The schools begin at the same hour, and are dismissed at the same hour. They would meet when the schools were out, and before they commenced; on their way to school and from school. The probability of meeting is the same in either case. The difference is simply in the meeting or not meeting in the school room under the control of the same teachers,—the teachers being always the first in school and the last to leave it. This is all there is in the plan. Now, the undersigned submits to any intelligent and candid person—is it not more improbable, to say the least, that there will be improper conduct between the boys and girls when they come to meet out of school, after having received from one common teacher—to whom they are responsible when they return—in the same room and before each other, "prudent counsel," lessons in "good behaviour," than if there had been no such meeting in school and they had received no such instructions or had received such separately and from separate and independent teachers? Is it not clear, that improprieties will be less frequent, as well as more easily detected, than if the two sexes met out of school only?

It has been said, that the fact of providing for a separation at recess and for separate entrances to the schools, is an admission of the main objections urged by the petitioners. But it appears to the undersigned that those who say this confound essential distinctions in propriety. The propriety of an association of boys and girls under the control of a suitable master in a school room, is one thing; the propriety of an association out of doors and under no control, is another and quite a different thing. It appears to the undersigned that one needs not to reflect very far to perceive that an association in the school room may be very proper, and at the same time an association at recess very improper.

It is, perhaps, hardly necessary that the undersigned should push this argument further, when reason is not left alone in the case, but experience, the testimony of masters, and common observation, directly confirm it. We know—every body who reflects, knows, that the meeting of boys and girls under suitable control, tends to refine and polish and give dignity and consideration to both. The manner and bearing of a boy who has been much in the society of girls, is more courteous and manly than that of one who has not; and the effect of the society of girls upon boys is not more beneficial than that of boys upon girls. There is a mutual improvement. It is for the sake of this, doubtless, that even some of the gentlemen who signed this catalogue of objections, consent to send their daughters to dancing schools, there to meet boys, and where they meet under far less restraint, too, than in our grammar schools, and under the charge of masters, it is at least safe to say, not of a higher moral culture than our grammar school teachers. Out of doors, it has been said, that this union is calculated to polish and otherwise benefit the boys at the expense of the girls. But this is not so. The girls in the Bunker Hill school, where this plan has long been in operation, may safely challenge a comparison with the Harvard in respect of good deportment; while in respect of studies, it is an incontestible fact that the former are more thorough than those in any and every other school.

But this is not all. The petitioners still object, that, “at a period of life when the mind receives its deepest impressions, a mixed school is fatal to that *careful choice—that selection of worthy and suitable companions*—which is especially necessary for girls, as the instincts which draw the sexes together, begin to make their first developements. *A mistake at this period—which care and prudence may prevent—often becomes a source of lasting misery.*” Now, it is not easy to mistake the scope of this objection. It is not an objection that goes to the plan adopted by the late board here, that is, the plan of uniting boys and girls in the same school room; but to the common school system—the law of the Commonwealth—the plan of educating all classes of children in one common school—a plan that is, upon all occasions and every where, our boast—the boast of New England—the boast especially of Massachusetts. The objection is an attack upon the common school system; it strikes at the root of that system; it will last as an objection while that system lasts. It demands for the children of the petitioners—or rather the gentlemen who furnished these objections for them—a more select association. In place of common schools, it argues for select ones. It deplores the “lasting misery” which may come from a companionship—perhaps an alliance—with the “unwashed.” Against this deplorable calamity, the school

committee is begged to set its face ! But what has the school committee to do with it ? The remedy is with the legislature ; to that the objectors must go. The law has provided that these schools shall be public and common ; that the advantages and opportunities shall be spread while the Commonwealth lasts, in the various parts of the State, and among the different orders of the people. They are intended expressly for the benefit of all the inhabitants. The rich and the poor, the high and the low, the polite and the vulgar, all have an equal right in them. Such is the plan. The teacher must do his best for the improvement of all. If a child become incorrigible, he may be sent away from school ; but while he is controllable and can be made to conform to school rules, and contaminate not the rest with something worse than an apprehension that he may engage in a family above his own level, *he must be retained.*

There is one fact, which has been overlooked in the discussions of this question, that is of some consequence. It is, that the sphere of a vicious boy, if there be one such in school, is lessened one half by this arrangement. Whereas the number of boys in each school under the other plan was two hundred, it is now but one. It is not girls, as a general thing, that such boys seek as associates. A very vicious boy is seldom found in the society of girls ; and instead of two hundred fellows from among whom to select his comrades, he has now only half that number. This is certainly an object gained.

But then there are men, say the petitioners, and tax-payers, too, who have *conscientious objections* to this plan ; that is, of course, the plan of putting boys and girls in charge of the same teachers in the same room. Now, inasmuch as the objections of fact are all separately stated, the undersigned infers that by this the petitioners mean an objection resting solely in the conscience of the objector ; that is, an objection having no objective existence,—a sort of conscientious scruple. For such, the undersigned begs to assure the committee, he entertains a becoming respect. A scruple, whether of conscience or of intellect, may be valid for one who entertains it ; it may be taken to determine his course. But in order that it may constitute a ground for our action, it must be valid also for us ; and it cannot be valid for us unless it reposes upon grounds objectively sufficient. A scruple in itself is not a basis of action for one who has it not. In this case, the scruple reposes upon the reasons or supposed reasons already considered. If it has been shown that these have no validity, what becomes of the scruples ? We may lament the tenderness of the conscience that deprives one of benefits so substantial ; but what are we to do about it ? The case admits of no remedy.

Besides, may not one mistake his will or temper for a scruple? or, may it not be an illusion? And, in such a case, who is to decide? The laws of the State do indeed exempt a certain class of persons from the performance of certain duties, and again from the performance of certain others in a particular way; but whoever heard these scruples assigned as a reason for a change in the general plan for the great public? In the cases referred to, in the exemption of Quakers and Shakers from military duty, for example, the law requires a certificate signed by at least two persons, that the party claiming an exemption has given some outward evidence that he really has scruples. And in the case of the administration of oaths, the law also provides that persons who object to the usual form may be examined as to their scruples upon their *voir dire*, before affirming, and the magistrate must be satisfied of the truth of such declaration before the party may affirm. But here we have not the advantage of any such test; and it is not difficult to see to what such objections would lead us, were we to yield to them. The undersigned holds it to be the duty of the committee in fixing upon a plan for schools, to fix upon the best possible; which having done, if a portion of those designed to be benefited by it, become possessed of conscientious objections or scruples or illusions, so that they are unwilling to avail of it, the committee may safely acquit themselves of blame.

Such are the objections to putting boys and girls into the same school room. The petitioners say, that, there are others they might have stated, had they been permitted a personal hearing. The sub-committee were unanimously of the opinion, that it was best, that, to avoid misunderstanding, the objections of the petitioners should be written down by themselves; and from the known intelligence and ability of the petitioners, and the zeal manifested by them in the case, and the length of time taken to frame their answer, it is but fair to presume, that, if they have not stated all the objections, they have at least stated the strongest that could be stated. However this may be, in closing their statement, the petitioners say, they deem these reasons "*strong, serious and decisive.*" Upon a careful consideration of them, the undersigned cannot agree with the petitioners. They appear to him, on the contrary, not only not strong, serious and decisive, but neither decisive, strong, nor serious. So far as they have any validity, they are rather objections to the common school system than to any plan or part of a plan of this committee.

Thus far, it will be seen, the undersigned has considered this question chiefly in a moral point of view,—the only point of view from which the petitioners regard it. But there is another view to be taken of it,—a psychological one. Girls, as a general thing, receive impres-

sions into the mind more readily than boys ; boys subject these impressions, when received, to a severer criticism in the understanding. The former perceive things more readily, the latter cognize more closely. The union of the two in the same class will benefit both ; for it will give aptness to the one and strength and solidity to the other. There will be a mutual emulation ; the progress will be more rapid. There is already a very perceptible improvement in the schools under this plan, not only in respect of order and government and the general appearance and deportment of the scholars, but in learning, also. It has reacted upon the teachers, and aroused them, too, to new life and energy. It promises, in the judgment of the undersigned, if left undisturbed, the most auspicious results.

Is it not obvious, then, in what manner we ought to proceed ? Suppose we grant the prayer of the petition. Shall we stop at that ? If we place our action upon moral grounds, how can we justify ourselves in permitting the evil to be continued in the other schools ? Why continue to prepare to put in operation the same plan in the High school, where, if the objections of the petitioners have any validity, they apply with far greater force than in the Harvard ? The undersigned is free to say, that for his own part, he has no faith in that morality which satisfies itself with a compromise with evil ; at least such a compromise—a compromise which concedes three parts to evil, and takes only one to itself. Shall we say, we will wait for a petition from the other districts ? Why should we wait ? Why should we, with whom the right and the duty to act, rest, make a petition a condition precedent to the removal of evil ? Why ask to have these objections repeated to us, when we have already determined upon the sufficiency of them against the system ?

But these petitions will come. The first will be from the Warren school district ; soon, we shall have another from the Bunker Hill ; and, following that, still another from the Winthrop. They will not be so numerously signed as this, but nevertheless sufficiently so to demand our consideration. Nothing is easier than to get up such a petition. What shall we do when these come ? Suppose we refuse them. Upon what ground will we rest that refusal ? What objection is there to the plan in the Harvard school, that may not be urged with equal force against it in all the others ? The building is convenient—quite as convenient as either of the others ; the teachers are as well qualified—as watchful, and of as high moral culture ; the children are not more vicious. Then there is the argument that the schools should all be organized upon one and the same plan ; the advantages of which are obvious. These people, when they come, will tell us, that a plan that is bad for the Harvard, cannot be well for the Warren or the Win-

thorp or the Bunker Hill. They will tell us that, if it had nothing to recommend it for the Harvard, we ought to reform it altogether. And what is our answer? When we have adopted the reasoning of the petitioners, that the evil arises out of the distinctive nature of the two sexes, and that no vigilance of teachers can guard against it, we may find it difficult to show that the distinctive nature of boys and girls at the Warren and the Harvard is not much the same.

Suppose, then, we grant these petitions. We shall immediately have nearly the entire population of those districts, and by no means an inconsiderable portion of the Harvard, also, at our door, praying us to restore the present plan. They will come, not with merely assertions, but with arguments; not merely with objections without objective validity, but with objections founded in common reason. They will bring in their hands the report of our Chairman, if not, also, the address of the Mayor. They will point us to the votes of the late board, and to the votes of seven members of this present board, who, at one time or another, as members of that, have sanctioned the measure. They will demand of us the reasons for changing a system that we found in operation, adopted by our predecessors with great caution and after due deliberation,—as they will have a right to do. And what answer have we? Can we tell them that the system worked badly; that it promised ill results? Every principal teacher tell us, it is not so. All, save one, say, that its influence upon the manners, habits and morals of the scholars, is favorable; and even he, tells us, that it tends to good order and government in the school, and that, since the children must be in the same building, it is better that they should be in the same room, also. They will ask us, how, then, it came about, that some of us turned our backs, not only upon our predecessors and reason and the testimony of the masters, but upon ourselves, also; for unless some of us do that, the system must stand.

Suppose we say, we did it out of respect for the petitioners; for there is nothing else that we can say. Will they not ask us: "Have you not respect for us, also?" And what then shall we say? The undersigned confesses, that, for his own part at least, in any action not founded upon a just consideration of the measure itself, there appear difficulties not easily to be overcome in our way. However much we may desire to oblige the petitioners, it will not do to decide a case like this in the exercise merely of good-will to them. Our duty is of a sterner character. These school plans are an important means of education. The responsibility of deciding upon them is with us. In the exercise of this responsibility, in the opinion of the undersigned, we are forced of necessity to refuse the prayer of the petitioners. There is no other point at which we can stand. No

other course will put the question at rest. We may be thought unamiable in so determining; but that we cannot help. Such is our duty.

The undersigned, therefore, moves the following vote:—that the petitioners have leave to withdraw their petition.

SETH J. THOMAS.

*City of Charlestown, May 24, 1848.*

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IN full board of the School Committee, June 6, 1848,—

On motion that the petitioners have leave to withdraw their petition, the yeas and nays being ordered, there were, Yeas five, viz. : Thomas, Gulliver, Tufts, Miskelley and Thorndike. Nays, six, viz. : Moore, Sanger, Parker, Adams, Culbertson and Frothingham. So the motion did not prevail.

Upon motion that the prayer of the petitioners be granted, and that the boys occupy one room of the Harvard School House, and the girls the other, under their respective Teachers, the yeas and nays being ordered, there were, Yeas, five, viz. : Moore, Sanger, Parker, Adams, and Culbertson. Nays, six, viz. : Thomas, Gulliver, Tufts, Miskelley, Thorndike, and Frothingham. So the motion did not prevail. Whereupon, it was voted that the whole subject be indefinitely postponed.







